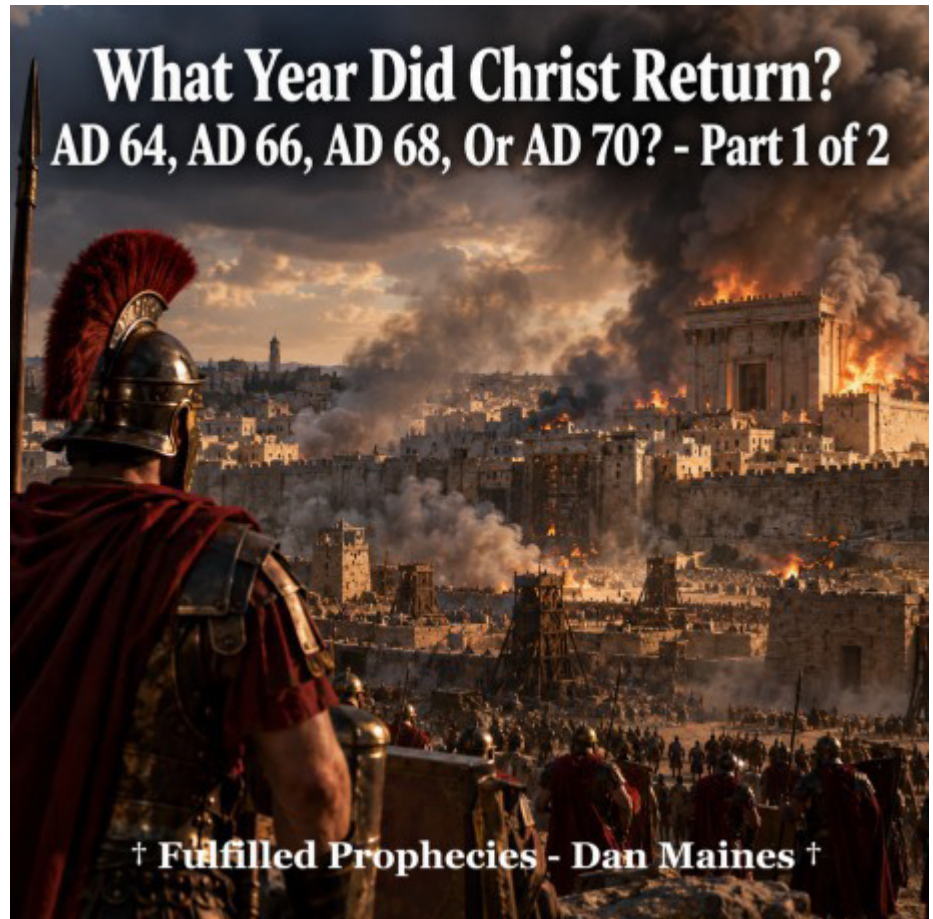


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**Second Coming -
What Year Did
Christ Return? AD
64, AD 66, AD 68,
Or AD 70? - Part 1
of 2**



By Dan Maines

What Year Did Christ Return?

AD 64, AD 66, AD 68, Or AD 70? - Part 1 of 2

Part 1 of 2

Part 2 of 2

Introduction

† There is considerable disagreement even among Preterists concerning the exact year of Christ's promised coming. Some argue for AD 64, others AD 66, others AD 68, and others AD 70. The question shouldn't be settled by choosing a favorite date,

but by allowing Scripture to identify what had to occur at His coming (Matthew 24:2, 30-34; Luke 21:20-28).

† Scripture clearly places Christ's coming within the lifetime of His first-century disciples. The real question is whether the coming was fulfilled when the Jewish War began, during the war, or when Jerusalem and the temple finally fell (Matthew 10:23; Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34).

† AD 64 is important because Nero's persecution of Christians intensified during that period. AD 66 is important because the Jewish revolt against Rome began and Jerusalem was threatened by Roman armies. AD 68 is important because Nero died and Rome entered a period of political turmoil. Yet none of those dates marks the completed destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that Jesus specifically predicted (Matthew 24:2; Luke 21:20-24).

† AD 70 uniquely brings together Christ's coming in judgment, Jerusalem's desolation, the destruction of the temple, and the judgment Jesus said would fall upon His generation (Matthew 23:35-38; Matthew 24:2, 30-34; Luke 21:20-27).

† For that reason, I believe Scripture points to AD 70 as the year of Christ's fulfilled coming in judgment. Events before AD 70 were part of the approaching judgment, but Jerusalem's destruction provides the clearest biblical marker for its climax (Luke 19:41-44; Luke 21:20-24).

Matthew 16:27-28

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every person according to his deeds. "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

† Jesus placed His coming within the lifetime of people physically standing before Him. He didn't say every person standing there would survive until that event, but He clearly said some of them would still be alive when they saw it (Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27).

† This eliminates a coming thousands of years later. Whatever

interpretation we accept must honor the first-century time limitation Jesus Himself gave (Matthew 10:23; Matthew 24:34).
† The language of coming with angels and rendering judgment connects His coming with judgment and the establishment of His kingdom authority (Matthew 13:40-43; Matthew 25:31-34).
† AD 70 fits that framework because Jerusalem experienced the covenant judgment Jesus repeatedly said would fall upon His own generation (Matthew 23:35-38; Luke 19:41-44).

Matthew 24:30

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

† Jesus used prophetic judgment language already established in the Old Testament. God riding upon clouds described divine judgment against nations without requiring God to descend bodily from heaven (Isaiah 19:1; Psalm 18:7-12).

† The coming of the Son of Man was therefore a royal and judicial coming. Christ's authority would be demonstrated through the judgment He had pronounced upon Jerusalem (Matthew 23:36-38; Luke 19:41-44).

† This coming belongs to the same prophecy in which Jesus described Jerusalem's temple being destroyed. Separating the coming from that judgment breaks apart the context Jesus gave His disciples (Matthew 24:2-3; Luke 21:5-7).

† The Roman campaign began before AD 70, but the temple Jesus specifically said would be demolished remained standing until the final stage of Jerusalem's judgment (Matthew 24:2; Luke 21:6, 20-24).

Matthew 24:34

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† Jesus didn't leave the timing indefinite. He said all these things would occur before that generation passed away (Matthew 23:36; Luke 21:32).

† All these things includes the coming of the Son of Man because Jesus had just described that coming within the same prophecy (Matthew 24:29-33).

† We can't move His coming outside that generation without separating the event from the time statement Jesus attached to it (Matthew 16:27-28; Luke 21:27-32).

† AD 64, AD 66, and AD 68 all fall within the correct generation, but simply being within the generation doesn't prove which year represents the climax. Jerusalem's predicted desolation and the temple's destruction provide the identifying events (Matthew 24:2; Luke 21:20-24).

Luke 21:20-22

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.

† Jesus identified Jerusalem itself as the target of the approaching judgment. The surrounding armies were the warning sign that her desolation was approaching (Luke 19:41-44; Luke 23:27-31).

† This distinction is critical. Seeing Jerusalem surrounded wasn't necessarily the completed fulfillment. Jesus said that when they saw the armies, they would know that her desolation was near (Luke 21:23-24).

† AD 66 therefore has tremendous prophetic importance because the appearance of Roman forces around Jerusalem corresponds with the warning Jesus gave His disciples to flee (Matthew 24:15-20; Luke 21:20-21).

† Yet the appearance of the armies was the sign of approaching desolation, not the completion of that desolation. Jesus distinguished the warning from the judgment that followed (Luke 21:20-24).

† Jesus called these the days of vengeance and connected them with the fulfillment of what had been written, showing that

Jerusalem's destruction was covenant judgment, not merely another political war (Deuteronomy 28:49-57; Daniel 9:26-27).

Luke 21:27-28

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

† Notice the progression in Jesus' words. When these things began happening, their redemption was drawing near. The beginning of the events wasn't necessarily their completion (Luke 21:20-24).

† This helps explain why AD 66 shouldn't automatically be identified as the completed coming merely because the armies appeared and the war began (Matthew 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24).

† The disciples were to recognize unfolding signs leading toward the culmination of the judgment, and Jesus told them that when they saw these things happening they would know that God's kingdom was near (Luke 21:29-31).

† Jesus then placed the completion of the entire prophecy within their generation, leaving no room for a fulfillment thousands of years later (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32).

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear. When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.

† Hebrews describes the old covenant as obsolete, aging, and ready to disappear while contrasting it with the better covenant established through Christ (Hebrews 8:6-12).

† Christ established the new covenant through His sacrificial death, while the earthly sanctuary and its priestly ministry continued functioning during the transition period (Hebrews 9:8-15; Hebrews 10:9-18).

† The earthly sanctuary represented the old covenant order that couldn't provide the permanent access accomplished through Christ (Hebrews 9:1-12; Hebrews 10:19-22).

† The approaching removal of the old order fits the New Testament's repeated expectation that a decisive covenantal change was near (Hebrews 10:25, 37; Hebrews 12:26-28).

Hebrews 10:37

For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay.

† The writer of Hebrews expected Christ's coming within a very little while. This wasn't language describing an event thousands of years in the future (Hebrews 10:25; James 5:8-9).

† The coming was genuinely near to those original believers, agreeing with Jesus' generation statement and the apostles' repeated declarations of nearness (Matthew 24:34; 1 Peter 4:7).

† Hebrews repeatedly contrasts the temporary old covenant order with the permanent kingdom believers were receiving through Christ (Hebrews 8:6-13; Hebrews 12:22-28).

† The approaching judgment would shake what could be shaken while leaving the unshakable kingdom of Christ standing (Hebrews 12:26-28).

Revelation 1:1-3

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

† Revelation establishes its own time frame. Its events were to happen shortly because the time was near (Revelation 22:6, 10).

† That language agrees with Jesus, Hebrews, James, and Peter concerning an approaching first-century judgment (Matthew 24:34; Hebrews 10:37; James 5:8-9; 1 Peter 4:7).

† Revelation wasn't describing events that would suddenly become near thousands of years after its original audience received the book. John repeatedly told those original churches that the fulfillment was near (Revelation 2:16; Revelation 3:11; Revelation 22:7, 12, 20).

† Its judgment imagery fits the approaching judgment of the city where the Lord was crucified and the vindication of God's persecuted people (Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 11:8; Revelation 18:20, 24).

Revelation 11:1-2

Then there was given to me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the courtyard which is outside the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

† Revelation portrays the temple, altar, worshipers, and holy city in the setting of approaching judgment, matching Jesus' prophecy concerning Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20-24).

† The holy city being trampled by the nations closely parallels Jesus' statement that Jerusalem would be trampled by the Gentiles (Luke 21:24).

† The prophecy therefore directs our attention toward Jerusalem and its temple rather than making Nero's death the controlling event (Revelation 11:8; Matthew 23:37-38).

† The temple imagery also agrees with the New Testament's expectation that the old covenant order was approaching its final removal (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 12:26-28).

Revelation 22:10

And he said to me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

† Daniel was told to seal his prophecy because its fulfillment was still distant from him, but John received the opposite command because Revelation's fulfillment was near (Daniel

12:4, 9; Revelation 1:1-3).

† Revelation repeatedly emphasizes this nearness at both the beginning and the end of the book (Revelation 1:1, 3; Revelation 22:6-7, 10, 12, 20).

† AD 70 fits both this nearness language and the Jerusalem judgment Jesus placed within His own generation (Matthew 23:36-38; Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-32).

† Scripture doesn't give us a sentence saying Christ returned in AD 70. Instead, Scripture identifies the timing, generation, location, temple, judgment, and events associated with His coming, allowing those markers to identify the historical fulfillment (Matthew 24:2, 30-34; Luke 21:20-32).

Why Not AD 64?

† AD 64 is significant because Nero's persecution belongs to the first-century period of suffering experienced by Christians, but persecution itself doesn't satisfy Jesus' specific prediction concerning Jerusalem and its temple (Matthew 24:2, 9; Luke 21:12-20).

† Jesus connected His generation's judgment with Jerusalem, her house, and the temple His disciples were looking at (Matthew 23:36-38; Matthew 24:1-2).

† The biblical markers therefore require more than persecution. They require Jerusalem's desolation and the destruction of the temple (Luke 19:41-44; Luke 21:20-24).

† AD 64 belongs to the period leading toward the fulfillment, but it doesn't provide the strongest biblical marker for the completed judgment (Matthew 24:29-34; Luke 21:27-32).

Why Not AD 66?

† AD 66 is extremely important because Jerusalem's military crisis provided the kind of warning Jesus told His disciples to watch for (Matthew 24:15-20; Luke 21:20-21).

† Jesus specifically said that seeing Jerusalem surrounded meant her desolation was near, showing a distinction between the appearance of the sign and the completed desolation (Luke 21:20-24).

† The disciples were commanded to flee when they recognized the warning. That command makes sense only if time remained between recognizing the sign and experiencing the full judgment (Matthew 24:16-20; Luke 21:21).

† AD 66 therefore marks a major stage in the fulfillment, but Jesus' prophecy continues from the surrounding armies to Jerusalem's desolation, the days of vengeance, and the coming of the Son of Man (Luke 21:20-28).

What About Josephus' Report Of Armies In The Clouds In AD 66?

† Josephus reported an extraordinary phenomenon before Jerusalem's destruction in which chariots and armed troops were reportedly seen moving through the clouds and surrounding cities. He also reported that at Pentecost the priests heard a great noise and what sounded like a multitude saying, "Let us remove hence." Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 3.

† This doesn't require us to identify AD 66 as the completed coming of Christ. Jesus specifically distinguished between the beginning of the signs and the completion of Jerusalem's judgment. When these things began happening, His disciples were to recognize that their redemption was drawing near (Luke 21:25-28).

† Jesus also said that when Jerusalem was surrounded by armies, they were to know that her desolation was near. He didn't say Jerusalem's desolation was already completed when the armies appeared (Luke 21:20-24).

† Josephus' report therefore fits remarkably well within the period of signs accompanying the approaching judgment. If the reported armies and chariots in the clouds are connected with Jesus' prophecy, they can be understood as signs announcing and accompanying the coming judgment rather than requiring us to move its completed fulfillment from AD 70 back to AD 66 (Matthew 24:29-34; Luke 21:25-32).

† Scripture itself gives us this progression: Jerusalem would be surrounded, the disciples would flee, Jerusalem would

experience the days of vengeance and desolation, the Son of Man would be seen coming in a cloud, and all these things would be completed within that generation (Luke 21:20-32).

† This means AD 66 and AD 70 don't have to compete with each other. AD 66 marked the opening phase and unmistakable signs of the judgment, while AD 70 marked its climactic completion with Jerusalem's fall and the destruction of the temple Jesus specifically said would be torn down (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:5-6, 20-24).

† In fact, Josephus' account can strengthen the AD 70 position rather than weaken it. The signs came first, exactly as signs are supposed to do, while the catastrophic event they warned about followed. Jesus told His disciples to recognize the approaching judgment by its signs and then declared that all of it would be accomplished within their generation (Matthew 24:32-34; Luke 21:28-32).

† Josephus wasn't alone in reporting extraordinary signs surrounding Jerusalem's judgment. The Roman historian Tacitus also recorded reports of armies in the sky, flashing weapons, supernatural illumination of the temple, and a mysterious voice associated with departure. Tacitus, *Histories*, Book 5, Chapter 13. These historical reports are striking when compared with Jesus' prophecy of signs and the Son of Man coming in the clouds, but they don't require AD 66 to be the completed fulfillment (Matthew 24:29-34; Luke 21:25-32).

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does Scripture clearly place Christ's coming in the first century?

A: Yes. Jesus said some standing before Him wouldn't taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom, and He said His generation wouldn't pass away until all the events He described were accomplished (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34).

Q: Why isn't AD 64 the strongest date?

A: AD 64 belongs to the first-century period of persecution, but

Jerusalem hadn't yet experienced the desolation and temple destruction Jesus specifically predicted (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20-24).

Q: Why is AD 66 so important?

A: AD 66 is important because Jerusalem's military crisis corresponds with Jesus' warning concerning the approaching desolation. His disciples were told to flee when they recognized that warning (Matthew 24:15-20; Luke 21:20-24).

Q: Do Josephus' reports of armies and chariots in the clouds prove Christ's coming was completed in AD 66?

A: No. If those reported phenomena are connected with Jesus' prophecy, they fit the signs accompanying the approaching judgment. Jesus said that when these things began happening, redemption was drawing near, and He distinguished Jerusalem being surrounded from the desolation that followed (Luke 21:20-28).

Q: Does AD 66 compete with AD 70?

A: No. AD 66 can mark a major beginning and warning stage of the judgment while AD 70 marks its climactic completion. Jesus' prophecy moves from Jerusalem being surrounded to her desolation and the completion of all these things within His generation (Luke 21:20-32).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:30; Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-22; Luke 21:27-28; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 11:1-2; Revelation 22:10

† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 3; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5, Chapter 13

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